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SILENUS

BY

THOMAS WOOLNER

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PART FIRST

BOOK I.

SILENUS, radiant as a summer morn,
Smiling exultant in the might of youth,
Loved of the loveliest, Syrinx ; in her grace
Surpassing swallows turning on the wing
At even over water brimmed with gold.

And Syrinx loved Silenus. Never yet
Until he loved her had the nymph been moved
By other than the love of tranquil streams ;
The witchery of birds ; flowers, and the growth
Of woodlands wild, and woodland happiness.

But they must part ; these lovers fair and true ;
For he with Dionysus now must range

Far Indian lands to bear the pregnant vine ;
Compelled by prime affection's ancient bond
To labour for the God wherever led.
Self-thwarting, therefore, in his love content
The dear delight awaiting him delayed
Till his return.
And Syrinx drooped not tho'
No more beholding at the dewy dawn
Her lover's advent thro' the morning sun
To take her in his arms. Tho' now no more
She felt his living kisses drain her soul ;
The memory of his presence and his love,
Made every day a wonder full of joy,
And gave the darkness such auroral dreams
She fain on waking sank again to sleep.

Ofttimes beside a solitary pool
She looked down laughing to her face within,
Wondering what passages of grace it bore
Beyond the grace of other forest nymphs
That won her Demigod to gaze entranced !

One summer noon in idle bliss she lay
Fingered by slender grass, and flower-bekissed,
Her glances wandering daintily adown
Those undulating beauties half concealed,
He ever likened unto all things fair!
Pleased with his similes, she stretched her limbs
Their utmost gleaming length, and moving tossed
Aside her garment that her beauty lay
Open and perfect to the wistful wind.
Enfolded arms behind her resting head
Eyes half-way closed, she dreamed of gladness past
And joy to come, when she should hold her Love
Safe in her arms, and lose him nevermore.
Tho' fair the dream she felt her will enthralled,
And some uncertain fear of danger nigh
That hovered thro' the changes of her bliss.
With all too broad a gaze shone the bright day;
From overhanging branches little birds
Pried curiously; and hovering butterflies,

Familiarly descending on her charms,
Outspread their glimmering splendours; while the spell
Held her fast bound as Cepheus' chain held fast
Andromeda's white beauty, whereon glared
Poseidon's dreadful monster of the sea.
Thus tranced she lay in durance, till a flush
Of twittering birds, dived in the neighbouring shade,
And in the leaves a rustling near, unlike
The peaceable soft wind, lifted her gaze
Where stared two brilliant goat-eyes; cheeks agrin,
Ruddy and strained; and long white clashing teeth!

"O tempting nymph; fairly and plainly done;
I saw thee spurn the foolish folds away;
Well conscious they were not the charm I sought,
In that I munch the kernel not the shell.
Praise thou shalt have, for rarely can be seen

Temptation in more captivating shape,
More softly moulded to ensure my joy!
Then why delay? If hungry, and the fruit
Hang ripe before us, why not pluck and eat?
Thou canst not ripening more richly blush,
Nor I more hungered wax. Ah, then be wise,
Frankly embrace the offering of Fate,
And pass with me to immortality."

"Away, thou evil-spoken, misformed God!
Who thief-like crouched and slyly watched to gloat
In stolen espial on my quietude.
Swine that crunch acorns and that grunt are tuned
As much to clemency and tender care
For purity of earthly maid or nymph
As thou art, God of goats insatiate!
Know thou this beauty, that excites thy hope
To hateful grinning leer, shall never know

The touch of even an Olympian God,
Nay, not if mighty Zeus himself should smile,
To thwart Silenus, who commands my love."

"Prettily spoken, O voluptuous nymph!
Another wile to fan the flame yet higher
By coy resistance irresistible!
Erewhile I said rarely had beauty been
Temptation in more captivating shape;
But now so glowingly hath passion's fire
Inspired its blushes to the full-blown rose,
No other fruit can blush so ripe and sweet
To quench with sweetness lips of God athirst.
Then heed the speeding chance; in forest shade
Let us away to regions unexplored."

"You may perversely close your eyes from light,
In feigning bluntness to a plain intent;
But now my meaning you shall not mistake.

An easier task it were to make a doe
Feed upon garbage than to spirit me
By flatteries rank within thy loathly arms.
A nymph am I perfect in life; and pure
As any flower breathing its native air.
The wind and streams, the sparkling summer showers
That waken laughter in delighted leaves,
And music from the flowery grass, have been
Companions I have loved from infancy;
And tuneful songsters from my fingers feed.
Why should I leave this fair Elysian world
For horror, darkness, and my own contempt?"

"Nay, Syrinx, mine, by conquest justified,
Gazing unhindered on thy beauty thrown
Consentingly wide open to the day!
If I sagaciously can scent my game
And track to capture, must I then forego
My natural recompense because the prize
Loves freedom better than fair forfeiture?

What can thy beauty do against my strength?
Merely increase itself in vain affray,
Making my strength grow stronger with the strife!
Unwisely rash, shouldst thou attempt escape,
And flutter uselessly thy milky breath;
What could outstrip my rapid-leaping hoofs,
Whose clatter calls the nymph and satyr throngs,
Hands spread, to admiration as I flit:
One hoof drawn tight to ham, down click; anon
The other up, down click; and then along
The rocky river margin click on click;
Till envious birds would interchange their wings
For hoofs whose nimble play outspeeds the wind!"

Whereat, high-puffed in pride, the goat-legged God
Crying to Syrinx, "Now, behold! Behold!"

Went at a rate to prove no wily boast
His threat of certain capture in the chase.
As she beheld afar his goat-limbs wane,
And vanishing, his upper man-shaped form
Seemed moved by will alone ; suddenly then
Hope smiled and beckoned her the other way ;
And, like a creature hunted for its life,
She flew toward the sheltering river sedge ;
But scarce had started ere the crafty God
Caught her intent and, as on pivot, turned ;
And had he been a prey-bent vulture winged
He had not grown more rapidly to view
While leaping over the dividing space.

Tho' fleeing at her utmost swiftness she
Back glancing saw his fiery eyes astart,
And hands, tho' shut and fast against his sides,
That might at any moment snatch and seize.
Shone near, gloomed far those waters of despair!
Twice doubling she was headed from her course,

Hard followed by the hoofs' terrific click.
At length the river! Breathing smote her cheek,
And one red claw clutching her bosom tore
Its tender beauty as she swerving plunged
Deep in its water to escape the God.

The Demon waited by the water's edge,
Until for lack of breath she should arise,
When easy pastime then for him to bear
Her unresisting, to the woodland shade,
And leisurely devour the passive fruit.

But Syrinx, sinking to the river bed,
Anchored her fingers in the rooted sedge.
Devoted to Silenus she resolved
To hold them till she died, rather than live
And glance again at those red eyes of hell.
While thus against her own young life she strove,
Great Artemis, loving the forest nymph,

In pity flashed a brightness thro' her brain,
And smote her agony to sudden peace!

From that deep river-bed dream-borne she passed
Straightway again to happy infancy,
When danced the butterflies to laughing flowers;
When merry music in tumultùous froth
The maidens milked from kine at evenfall;
When cheery reapers sheared the standing corn,
And danced at twilight in the jocund hour
When sunshine waned into the harvest moon
Lighting the chase, the capture, and the kiss!
Then shone that day of glory when her fate
Surrendered to Silenus on the hills!
That day when tempted by the forest gloom
She rambled where huge over-clambered trees
Immeshed in trailers showered bright blossoms down
In odorous stars at every passing breeze.

Where twisting freshets sparkled from the rock,
And birds atwitter by the shallow pools
Curtseyed and sipped, or bathed their fluttering
wings.
Where brooding splendour lay athwart the grass
Her feet must traverse ere she could ascend
The blessed pathway winding through the cliff
Toward regions trodden by Immortals' feet!
O what a far-off world in one long stretch
Of lustrous mist and azure mountain-range
Floating on foam of oceanic light!
Heedless of distance, onward eagerly
She drank new joy with every quickened breath,
And every breath winged onward her desire
Beyond the beauty seen; transcending all
She hitherto had known.
But hark! Alarmed,
Her sense awoke to harsh reality;
Hearing hard by a roaring, as of clouds
Bursting in horror. Lo, a raging bull,
Stupendous, tearing the scorned earth to dust,

Lowering his horns, made at the nymph direct ;
When, conscious was she of a shadowy hand
Casting her swiftly on a heap of bines
That sinking bounded with her as in sport ;
Of some great mighty Shape hurling a spear
Slantwise against the brute, that checked, then turned,
And charged again : and thereupon the Shape,
Lifting a splintered fragment of the rock,
Struck his curled brow and crushed the monster's life ;
And dragging the dark carcase to a cliff
He thrust it down among the crags below.
Then calmly smiling on her thus he spoke,

" How came a nymph so young in these rough wilds
With no protection rambling here alone ?

" Syrinx am I ; I dwell in lower lands :
The forest wonders opening as I came

Lured me from space to space to ramble here.
But whence art thou who saved me, slaying death
With snatched-up fragment of the splintered rock?"

"Silenus I; Olympian Hermes' son,
Of Dionysus friend and follower.
That splintered fragment saved thy lovely self
From gored defacement and from mangled limbs;
And need of swiftness held the taint of chance,
Else slaying bulls I count but lightsome play,
As breaking necks of hares to puny man.
"Approving once my strength Athena smiled.
For when the banded Titans made assault
To overthrow the dreaded power of Zeus;
Pallas, the winged one, soared, and gloaring down
Alit before the mighty Virgin's feet,
And strove to clutch Her garment. She withdrew

A pace, and raised Her spear, and cleaved his brain.
Knowing the Goddess would abhor the sight,
Kindled to tenfold strength, grappling the bulk
I dragged the mountain-monster to the edge
And rolled his carcase down the Olympian wall.
This bull that chilled thy blood to white dismay
Had seemed a fuming pigmy alongside
That evil Titan by Athena slain.
"Let us now waive ungracious memories,
And cherish what is near. Ah, were it dear
To both as dear to me! I never loved
A Goddess, nymph, or mortal maid till now:
And now, O Syrinx, my whole soul is thine;
Yield me thyself and let me know of love!"

"I cannot else than love thee, Demigod!
To gaze on lovely; gentle as the doves
Taking the food I offer from my lips!"

"If like thy doves, then like thy doves I take
The food I long for from thy offering lips!"

Ah, then the wild delight of clasp and kiss
And drowning in forgetfulness! The thrall
Of mazed enchantment in those saving arms;
And rapture on the music of his heart
Beating a lullaby to blessed sleep!

Thus happy died fair Syrinx; in the flow
Of never-ceasing water thro' the land
Of pleasant shade that gave her beauty birth.

BOOK II.

FROM Indian heat where silent noons ablaze
Dwarf men's dark shadows on the smouldering earth,
And burn each aspect to the hue of shade,
With Dionysus great Silenus came,
Full of the starry light he knew would beam
In rosy lustre from her countenance
When he rejoicing should his Syrinx meet
And babble wonders to her wondering ears.

But when he heard how many a time the flowers
Had bloomed and faded since his Love was seen ;
And found no tongue to syllable a word ;

No trace or sign whereby her lonely fate
Might be pursued, he wandered wearily ;
While gloom came over him like darkening
clouds
When gathered into storm they blot the day.
"None breathed," he mused, "whose cruelty
would harm
A nymph so tuned responsive to delight!
And had she been by bear or wolf devoured,
Some ravelled scrap of raiment had been left,
Caught in a thorn or blown against the sedge ;
Something had told a tale or pointed clue!"
Conjecture, weary, faltered in the trail ;
And could not picture Syrinx sunk and drowned
In water native to her limbs as heaven's
Translucent azure to the flight of birds.

But never more was Syrinx seen of nymph,
Or mortal maid, or shepherd, as he loosed
His bleating charges from the trampled fold.
No longer from a lifted rock her voice

Was heard to hush the warblers of the wood ;
While timid creatures sidling crept anear.
Never more she with sprightly sister nymph
Glode in the river, diving swiftly down
To seize on twinkling fins of fish affright,
Or from the surface flashed in lovely gleams.
The deer she loved at wonted places stood,
Waiting, expectant, for her hand's caress ;
And all who knew her looks and gentle ways
Lacked some contentment common to the day.

Followed by forest shades that grew apace,
Silenus, moving by the shining stream
Listless, awoke to music, piercing, strange,
Melodious wailing pitiful, that smote
His heart to sorrowing for Syrinx lost.
And coming near the sound, he saw where Pan
Half lost in reeds, sat by the water's edge,
Blowing pipes fastened side by side, in length
Beyond a human span.

So rapt was Pan

In those wild notes he gave the listening wind,
Silenus stood unmarked by him awhile ;
But when their glances met, Pan, as if caught
In crime, upstarting, stretched his arms and fled.

"Why flies he thus?" Silenus mused. "What meant
That guilty cringe, and glittering in his eyes?
Why should his music smite this heart with pain
For my lost Syrinx? Syrinx loved him not.
Alas, how vain is thought! Where may I find
The voice to tell me where is Syrinx gone?"

While sighing thus, the reeds before him sighed,
Swaying in easy motion to and fro,
And every tongue told something to the breeze.
"Ah, lovely reed!" he moaned ; "thy grace accords
With my beloved Syrinx when she lived ;

Ah, now she lives in my sad heart alone.
I must away; away. Too much, too well,
Thou tellest me of grace for ever fled!"

Then as he left, the long leaves sighed forlorn,
"Silenus, O Silenus! wherefore leave
Thy Syrinx, as thou didst in times agone?"

He turned again. Sitting beside the reeds
He saw a tremble shivering thro' their leaves,
And every leaf became a tongue that talked
In multitudinous whispering. He strove,
But could not understand; and sat, hands clasped,
Agaze and hopeless.

Darkness hugged the land,
And both together slumbered deep in peace,
Save where great Artemis, kissing the cliffs,
Beamed smiles along the river, whose response
Quivered in laughter-light from every reach,
Till hidden by soft winding far away.

Why prattled still the reeds? Pan's guilty
stare,
Why should it burn his memory with pain?
And why should music of these river-stems
So sadly wail to him of Syrinx gone?
Alas, he knew not, and must waive the cause;
When, as the moonlight suddenly went out,
A flash within revealed the dreadful tale!
Syrinx he saw hard chased by nimble Pan,
And flushed with terror, his devoted nymph,
Plucked at by demon claws, plunge in the
stream
And her young spirit pass into the reeds
That now were whispering her sad well-away.

Taking them in his lonely arms he sighed,
"O loveliest of the loved, is this now all
Left of thee, once so pure and beautiful?
Must thou be now frail debtor to the wind
For voice to tell me thy dark sorrowing?
I sitting by thee with no power to soothe.

"How harsh and terrible the Fates! That I
Should live my life, and never taste of love
Till thine came on me like the risen sun
After a dreaming night. And then awake,
The great round glory shining on me full,
That I should turn and leave to fickle chance
This new delightful kingdom where I reigned;
Straightway invaded by remorseless Pan!

"'Twere idle waste to raise a feeble arm
Against the measure of eternal doom.
But must he free, and safe, and scathless go?
And must I live, for ever in my gaze
His grinning goatish leer, and unavenged?
Nay, I will front the thief. My spear! my
spear!
Farewell, my Syrinx; one more last farewell."

Then lifting up his weighty spear, whereby
Had fallen lions and striped tigers fierce,
And wide-horned monsters with dark eyes of fire,

And others that seemed mountains as they moved,
With noses used as hands, and legs like trees
In girth, Silenus left the river-side
And slowly paced into the forest gloom.

BOOK III.

THE sun had set the mountain-tops afire,
And every thicket singing for delight ;
And brought shy creatures, dainty-paced, abroad
To graze the open, gray with nightly dew.
Aloft the eagle in gigantic sweeps
Winged thro' the dazzled air, or pausing, pierced
The vaporous world beneath with dire intent,
Throughout awe-stricken woods casting a hush.

Near his thatched hovel in the dewy morn
Blowing his cheerful pipes sat Pan the God.
Late partner of his night, a woman faun,
Lay near him dead, he having wrung her neck
Because the goat she milked had overturned
The bowl he waited for just brimmed and frothed,

And baulked him of his draught. He meant
her flesh
To feed some favourite panthers caged and tame.
While straggling round him herds of satyrs
thronged,
Their ruddy bodies glowing in the beams
Of early day. Some milked ; some slaughtered
goats ;
And some their playful flocks drove pasture-
ward ;
While the God laughed to count the rich increase.

But ha ! the great Silenus spear in hand.
Advancing by colossal strides he fronts
The cowering God, who drops his music pipes,
And bends to steal away.
Silenus cries,
" Move but a hoof and my impetuous spear
Goes thro' thy body in the solid earth,
Fixing thee there till thou hast heard thy
doom."

For the first time in Pan's gay history
The grinning corners of his mouth fell down :
To ashy-pale his fiery visage waned ;
And his goat eyes stared vacantly around.
Shuddering with terror, writhed his shrinking frame
And hanging feebly jarred his cloven feet.

" Demon accursed ! Doomed as I was to leave
My helpless Syrinx, thou didst count it safe
Unpityingly to hunt the nymph to death.
Silenus absent ; no protector by ;
No eye to see ; no tongue to tell the tale !
" And when the Goddess Artemis for love
Transformed the murdered nymph to river reeds,
Thou must go cut and fashion them forsooth
To music-pipes, and sate thy pampered self
In making wail for thy defeated hope !
In wanton deed and unrelenting spite,
Since crime began no crimes have equalled thine.

And thou ; unable to conceal thy crime !
Else wouldst thou not have shown that guilty eye
Glittering aslantwise when we met, and shrugged,
And slunk away, vile thief, in abject fear.
Thou didst not know the river reeds would talk
And tell thy crime, commingled lust and death,
Thy pastime, grinning lust and death. Not far,
The naked proof ! There sprawled a victim lies,
Fair in her woman's form ; her cloven feet
Twisted aside in death's sharp agony.
Does all Olympus sleep, such ruthless crime
Can rage unhindered in the open day ?"

His clear voice rang, and echoing thro' the vale,
Startled the fauns and satyrs with amaze.
Quitting their toil they crowded eagerly,
Wondering their God, low-crouched and pallor-struck,
Should quiver cringing like a beast chastised !
Silenus cried,

"Behold that murdered thing!
Was there not one of all you dastard crew
To stand between her and those strangling claws?
Had she no lover by; or father near;
No one of kin to stretch an angry arm
To shield and save her from this monstrous fate?"

"His favourite daughter," every voice replied,
"By forest maiden captured in the wood,
And hither brought. When the babe due was born
Its little goat limbs smote her heart to tears,
And hating tears Pan slew her; penned the babe
For nursing with a young full-uddered goat;
Where she grew strong, well-loved throughout our woods;
And until now we knew not of her death."

And all the satyrs raised a doleful howl,
Roaring a loud continuous wrathful storm;
Beating their breasts they stamped their cloven hoofs.

Then shrank the demon, horror-struck, appalled.
More than the spear these voices made him quail.

"Are thy bolts spent, O Zeus? Athena, where
Thy dreadful spear the irresistible?
Is Justice dead; or, angered, has She left
This earth to chance and cold malignity?

"I pierce the savage future, and behold
A world without Olympian government,
Wherefrom the Gods have vanished into night:
The memories of them fled, save what remain
As statues sunk in fragments thro' the land;
Unearthed by prying creatures bent on gain,
Or patching pieces of the Gods to shrines
Whereon to rear their naked vanities;
Knowing no more of Gods and their decrees
Than thou canst know of love and purity,
Or kindliness to gentle weaklier things.
Tho' fled the highest Gods from that dark
world,

I see, far-shadowing in times to come,
The Gods of gloom triumphant there, and thou
By darker evil in ascendency ;
Nations and Powers, vast peoples falling down
In grovelling baseness abject at thy feet.

"Yea, grin and brighten at the prophecy
Till thou hast heard the whole ; await the end !

"Cheaters and thieves, thy worshippers, contrive
And build strong places to maintain their spoil,
Forged into power for greater plundering.
These robbers wage remorseless war and seize
Countries by industry wrought into wealth ;
When, proud of pillage, blood-dyed criminals,
Tricking themselves in gauds and blazoned pomp,
With hope of gold, device, and phrases deft,
Trail the lured many, till the dupes betrayed

Rise goaded to despair and pluck them down,
Then rush the vacant palaces to rule
By force and guile, as ruled their former lords.
"Dearly thy worshippers love hoarded gold;
This will their laws most zealously protect;
Harsh in enactment, prompt in punishment:
But outraged honour, insult, mangled life,
Shall lightly be condoned, or lightly passed
With empty forfeiture and formal frown.
But tho' thy worshippers control mankind
Their adoration brings thee no content.

"This then thy burning doom:
Tho' Lord of all,
No one who breathes, from the proud king enthroned
To beggar whining at his guarded gates,
But will deny tho' fast he worship thee!
"When the great Gods have fled, and hapless men
In gloom are left with thee, some lofty few,

By agony such as Prometheus bore ;
By looks of mute entreaty, eloquent ;
By fixed endurance till the fibres snap ;
And watch determined creeping ever on ;
By resolution's armed assail and shock
Doing vast slaughter on embattled foes,
Shall raise triumphantly their cherished Gods
In splendid temples, forcing every knee
To bend in reverence before their shrines.
" The righteous will in every age bend low
For very truth and very love to truth.
While these thyself and demon ways abhor,
The multiplying millions will be thine
In unacknowledged secret worshipping ;
A myriad-mass of hopeless hypocrites
Who feign the worship custom bids them hold ;
And nourish evil they perforce decry.
Whose blameless language hides fell purposes ;
Transacting crime while lauding righteousness,
They feast on what they outwardly eschew ;

Soaked thro' with falsehood, winked at, understood,
Till understood unaided by a hint.
"The king, so screened from every wholesome breeze,
The air he breathes so drugged with flattery,
So poisoned source and flow of every rill
That brings him knowledge, the proud gold he wears
Circles a living lie. His influence
Corrupts more deeply those corrupting him;
Gendering hatred and confusion where
His kingly duty and high privilege
Had tolled the blessing of a people's love.
"Exalted priests well recompensed to serve
The latter Gods shall warmly worship thee:
Denouncing wealth and every fleshly lust,
They vie together in superfluous pomp;
The lees of luxury in purple stains
Stagnant upon their cheerful visages;
While wrangling with each other over spoil,

Tempted by promises, or wrenched by threats
From weakling followers in sickness cast.
"Skilled masters of the lyre, that sacred boon
Whereby my Father, Hermes, challenged man
To sing of heroes and immortal Gods,
Leaving the vantage of their sunlit heights,
Shall grovel with thy multitude and touch
Light tuneful music for their revelry:
Each cadence measured to the tune of gold,
Lavishly jingled in their raptured ears.
"Thus shall this earth, halved between night and day,
Whose loveliness brings kisses down from heaven
In flashing fire, sunshine, and singing showers,
Be as a desolation to his eyes
Who sees thee undisguised and dominant!
And him thy worshippers will hate, tho' bound
By the same oaths, at the same altar shrines;
But hate in secret working fell despite
They whisper not to kin or nearest friend.

"In public adoration parents kneel
Before the Gods their nation owns divine,
What time their prayers slip covertly to thee
To load their progeny with opulence;
And warriors ask to fight thro' fame to wealth
That they may stalk in decorated pride.
Some with full granaries call famine down
That they may pare starvation to the bone;
And beauty prays that her embellished charms,
Warming the market, may command full price.
"Each slave will love thee, vowing that he hates;
But, should some strange exception boast the truth,
He will be seized for madness, bound in chains,
And fastened in a dungeon till his death.
"This then thy doom; tho' thou shalt aid thy slaves
By every shift dark cunning can devise,
In fostering their desires' accomplishment;
Thine own desire, the naked pomp of power,

Shall fly thee ever, and for all thy toil
Never shalt thou taste glow of victory."

Silenus ceased, and stood alone with Pan.
For every shepherd, satyr, faun, and goat
Had fled and left the God for evermore.
His features ashy pale; its fire extinct
In that grim visage never glowed again;
Pinched now his shape, close shrunken like a corpse.
Two birds of prey wheeling in air swept by
With cough and scream, baffled of some intent,
Silenus marked, "Those evil wings," he cried,
"Carry a sign! The very vultures shun
Thy guilty carrion for their empty maws.
The swift Erinyes, unappeasable,
Dreading some ill unknown, pause in the chase,
Shrinking affrighted from thy loneliness."

Now, as the upward grin fell lax for dread,
When Pan beheld Silenus spear in hand

Advancing toward him with colossal strides,
The fiery bent of his insatiate self
Changed straightway into fierce malicious hate
Hard set on wreaking vengeance might and main.

Again Silenus cried, "Accursed go,
Lost in thy solitude thou never more
Shalt taste the freshness of the summer wind;
Shalt know but hate in ever-burning brain;
Rage and destruction bearing no delight.
Thy bitterest disgust, that life's increase
Surpasses thy persistence to destroy.
"Faithful, unshrinking Death, whose outstretched hand,
Soothing with soft inevitable touch,
Quenches the agony of humankind,
Cannot be known by thee.
"Thy worshipper,
Who sees the compassed object of his pains
Smitten, collapse and vanish into nought,

Dying in yells of wrath, and gnashing jaws,
From smouldering fire within, shall blast thy hate
In envious despair ; and thou wouldst crawl
A sheathless worm parched under blazing skies,
If, after torture, thou like him couldst rest !"

Head bending low, feet draggling, now accurst
Pan thro' the forest wandered to his fate.
Never seen more goat-horned and goat-behoofed
With shaggy thighs, and flesh of ruddy glow ;
But infinite in strange distinctive shapes
And livery shifting with the changing time.
Now voluble and sly he blandly soothes
Honour alarmed to ignominious peace,
Precursor of contempt and watchful hate
Biding a vantage for the grievous stroke.
Or aptly chosen honied phrases fire
Ravin for neighbouring land, madness for more ;
Till plunderers reeking weighted by their wealth

Consume in indolence. Now smiling one,
Sleek and grown bloat with unearned luxury,
Whose gray goat eyeballs brightly rolling fall
On shapely maidens, stately dames, who thrill
Unholy ecstasies and take the taint
He means. Now proudly strutting lord of vogue
He trails a hot throng in his glittering wake ;
Who fretting time and fortune scatter wide
The treasured power their wiser fathers stored.
In every guise, in every form he starts ;
The beggar's garb, the mien of kings. Now roars
A fervid patriot who overthrows
The rule and order grown of bygone toil.
Now whines the poor oppressed ones dreary woes,
That wins from wealth a bland beneficence,
The food that feeds, the succour that enslaves.
Now prompts the lure, the cruelty, despair
Of plotted failure launched as enterprise !
Now tempts young lowly damsels to destroy ;

While high-born bribe the lowly to conceal
Their fruitage plucked in dark forbidden ways ;
And ogresses in quiet villages
Batten in comfort on the waifs of shame.
The trader vends false bales, imprinted best,
Which in far lands unrolled are there revealed
Pierced thro' with foul decay. Yet greedier, some
Cheat poverty itself with measure short ;
And vaunted chieftains of advanced regard
Esteem a fraud fair use of barterer's skill ;
As men are free to use their ancient right
Of making choice between contending thieves.
By dulcet promises some creep to power
Whose shadows blight and wither priceless worth,
Whose dead weight crushing genius to the dust,
Cripples its flight to their own wingless range.

"Great nature's law," the worldly-wiselings cry ;

"Both rough and smooth we take as best we
can;
And ills march ever mixed with man's advance!"

Thus the dark demon incarnates his will
By slaves who prattle fiend philosophy
In phrases rolling off the fluent tongue,
Easy to say, remembered easily;
Sating with glamour tranquil multitudes
Who breathe contentedly the scentless death.

BOOK IV.

SILENUS, wretched on the morrow morn,
Wended his way where sank his hunted nymph
Beneath the water she in life had loved ;
Half soothed he thought to clasp those wailing leaves,
All that remained now of his flattering dream.

There by the stream, aghast, he saw, in room
Of grassy reeds, a parched and withered heap
That crumbled harshly unresponsive dust,
When down his hands fell thro' it in despair.
Taking two handfuls vacantly he raised
His arms as making an appeal to heaven ;
But rigid stood, aimless, and impotent :

An image in wild action motionless,
To strange and frightful pallor changed through-
out.

Casting at length the dust abroad, he sighed,
" There flies my solitary dream of joy.
A dream, a dream!"
Then with a dreadful cry
That pierced the forest depths, and made the
rocks
Thrill to their inmost hearts, Silenus fell,
And falling crashed his spear ; and helpless lay,
Ashy, as one long dead.

His anguish smote
The Naiades in sedgy nooks and Nymphs
And Dryads lone of ancient shadowy woods,
Who lifting lamentations all amain
Thronged to him lying prostrate and beloved ;
And kneeling strove with kisses, chafe of limbs,
And casting little handfuls of the wave

About his throat and brow, to summon back
The sharp-fled life.
In vain their tenderness
Was lavished on him, pressing bosoms warm
Fast to his chilly breast; laying their cheeks
Softly to his; while slender fingers combed
From the moist brow his dank and matted hair,
Calling with murmurous moan upon his name,
Until they sank beside him hopelessly;
The clouds above with shadow covering them,
Their solitude, and unavailing charms.
They lay in silence on the ancient Earth,
And looked like flowers that might lie there and fade,
And be within her substance drawn again.
But had the Earth growled inwardly and heaved
In quick succession of stupendous throbs,
They had not been with wonder startled more
Than when they heard Silenus mutter low:

"As rush, and reed, tall grasses, and pink
flowers,
Mirrored in softened hues within the stream,
Are to themselves that breathe the living air,
And guard the river banks, was she to me.
No sooner ripe than plucked! Nay, O, not
plucked,
But shaken from the stem into the stream,
Borne by the flow to darksome mystery.

"Close from me, Leto, close thy tender
eyes:
Or let their gracious light on others fall!
I could endure them were thy favour less.
Be harsh toward me in mercy. Do not let
Thy pitying sweetness mutely tell my loss!
Henceforth you see me broken worthless waste.
My spear is shivered; I am now no more
He that could front a monster and prevail.
"Despise me, Nysa! Strength and forecast
failed

When needed most to bear the stress and strain.
Why knew I not the demon's will accursed,
Nor stayed its guilty course by flashing spear?
Why, when she gave herself to me, forthwith
Did I desert her, tramping far-off tracts,
To teach their dusky dwellers wiser ways;
Leagues, moons away, taught savage men, when here
Ramped direst evil uncontrolled at home!
"Blinded with bliss was I, or I had known
Her risk with Pan should hateful chance entice!
"Unhappy fate to strive for others' good
And lose meanwhile our own. Fondly I thought
The bright regards my Syrinx cast around
Would be enjoyed by all, as they enjoy
The sunshine laughing thro' the summer rain.
"The Gods I counted just; Powers high and dark;

Riddles to Demigods and mortal men.
We must obey them blindly: vain to seek
In their decrees, all dimly understood,
A meaning running side by side with ours.
"A massive crag released from mountain wall
Rushing in thunder crushes all beneath.
It were as idle to beseech the rock,
Lightly to waver, falling as a leaf,
As make appeal to stay the hest of Gods!
Our feeble thoughts reach not their lofty wills;
Haply themselves the bounded ministers
Of Destiny unknown; for who shall say
Whence the first beat of power? Who wise to track
Thro' growth and change its pathway unto man,
Who also deals surely his stern decrees,
As beasts, and slaves, and captive women know.
"Ye lovely ones, yearning to soothe my woe,
O could I take a hand of each in mine

To wander onward till we reached a world
Where Gods had made no law nor man had dwelt!
And there live unremembered and content,
In the wild woods and by the mountain streams
That shine in loops and spaces thro' the sand;
Where lying we might watch the seabirds soar
And dolphins thro' the water leap and plunge.
"And should a roving storm disturb our day,
Straggling from troubled regions and escaped
Inexorable Zeus while dealing doom,
An estray like ourselves, its mighty roar
Should be our music; while its transient fire
In spasms of glory quivering thro' the heavens,
Should light with splendid wonder our new world.
"I am so languid now, a wounded wretch
Drained well-nigh of his blood, whose breath scarce lifts
His hollow breast, his eyes fast losing light,

Beholding me in pity might feel strong.
The stroke that wounded me cut tenderer cords
Than ever arrow pierced or blade could reach.
Such dread and horror fill my soul I seem
Some lost and evil creature soaked in crime
Suffering his punishment, but memory gone
Of what his sin had been.

"Great Heracles,
Smitten with madness from the ravenous pain
Of Nessus' poisoned blood, unwittingly
Into the sea his faithful Lichas threw,
Young Lichas whom he loved. Forgetfulness
Gently waved over him her airy hand,
And he was spared the bitterest agony
When flames consuming quenched his final pangs.
"Madness appals me. Could but memory lapse
In any way than thro' dark Lethe's stream!

Who drinks that chilling draught forgets de-
light
Together with past weariness and wrong.
"I would not lose my vision of the past:
Still would I see in fancy Syrinx left
With playful memory, while her glances rove
Her own young beauties in their perfect prime;
For, trifling with them, I had loved to show
Their undulations course in lily sheen,
While she enjoyed with smiles, and never knew
Herself to be a lovely marvel full
Of varied inexhaustible delight,
Till I awoke her wonder with the truth.
"Here wishing halts. I would shut out the
rest,
And would not have my backward gaze defaced
By horrors of the past.
"But drowsiness
Bethrals, I fain would slumber. Clymene,
And sweet Calypso, stretch forth each her
hand

To soothe my head softly with tender strokes ;
And you, O Eriphia, graciously
Throughout their length smooth my numbed, listless arms ;
And Leto, cool this anguish-stricken brow
With breathing fresh and sweeter than the rose ;
Thus let me feel your kindness till I sleep ! "

He ceasing sank in slumber as he spoke.
Nymphs, dryads, and wild naiades subdued,
Sat by, their long arms round each other twined ;
And some on others' shoulders pressed their chins,
And leaning forward watched his every breath.
One said, " Benignant fate had been their guide
To great Silenus lone and sorrowful ;
For he was softened in beholding them.
New honey would they bring him mixed with milk
Warm from young goats, or large-eyed sweet-breathed kine ;

And they would sing him tenderest songs of old,
Of fated lovers who had lost their loves
And wandered into glory other ways.
They would attend and serve him thro' the suns;
By moons would watch, and keep his slumber safe
From prowling creatures, and the dangerous shafts
Of Artemis that ofttimes pricked the brain
To madness; and would tend him till once more
He woke and drank the gladness of the morn.
And Dionysus, who Silenus loved,
Silenus his instructor and his friend,
He should be sought and told the dreadful tale,
And come with healing words of hope divine."

BOOK V.

"HAIL, mighty One! Hail, great Silenus, hail!
Look up, or thou wilt wear the earth to holes
With that hard wistful gaze. Behold the world
In glorious sunshine. Wherefore idly fix
Thy blank regards on nothing? Overhead
The very eagles fluttering for joy
Wing thro' the radiance upward lost in light!"

Thus Dionysus. For the God, to heal
His follower, now prostrate in despair,
Had come with nymphs and satyrs, leaping fauns,
Maenades, wild-haired and rosy-cheeked;
Flecked panthers snarling; serpents lithe and strong

That swathed him grimly, till his fondling hands
Stroked the bright scaling of their golden throats;
Then up in either hand he held them, pleased
To watch their forms disport in vacancy.

At timely glance the cymbals clashed as one,
Shrill shrieked the oaten pipes, bellowed the mouths
Of ramhorns blown by satyrs stout of breath;
While others shouted till the deafening din
Shattered in janglings harsh the outraged air.

"O Dionysus, wherefore thus disturb
This torpor that abates my wretchedness?
The torture slept awhile; why wake afresh
Feelings that hover over memory;
Why mock me, laying bare the cruel past?"

"Thou hast, beloved Silenus, dear and true,
Been ever my companionable friend:
Fired with old love this is the wherefore I,

Leaving my ivied rocks in forest glades,
Lovely with laurel-holt and asphodel,
Gather my frolic troop and bring them now
To wake and comfort thee with pregnant cheer.
"Gracious and fair, the nymph was meet for thee,
But thou by right of worth had been fit lord
To rule young Hebe, my bright sister, She
Who in Olympus filled the nectar bowls,
Now fast in wedlock with great Heracles.
"Behold the symmetry and burning hues
Of flowers expanded to their shapes complete:
A passing storm or footfall levels them
Sullied or crushed to ruin. Who despairs?
Yet but a little while, again behold
Their like in splendour blooming as before!
"As they are, to the Gods are nymph and maid
Of mortal birth; grateful to clasp, and sweet
Are they to kiss; and bravely they endure
The burden of our love. Their longest lives

To the duration of Immortals pass
As gnats their sunset hour to mortal man.
"Then why bewail a momentary joy?
Has love so fused thee with mortality
Thou art weighed down to earth, that thirsts for all
It once gave forth? Could sorrow bring her back,
Glowing and rosy to responsive life,
Sorrow were well bestowed. Now frets to waste
The glorious fervour that whole peoples fired
To feats beyond their wont. With me you loved
To mark the kindled passion we had roused
Achieve our purposes, when, casting thoughts
To men as sowers cast their seeds, we saw
Some wax in favour, and saw others sink,
Swilling the precious juices of the grape
That might have been their comforter and strength!

"Now shout, my jovial satyrs; lifting hoofs
Arouse Silenus to festivity!
If your sweet lives be brief, ye forest nymphs,
Brighten them while ye may. Enrich the round
Of bliss with grace surpassing birchen-trees,
When trembling in the wind their branches play.
Show him, ye stately naiades of the wave,
That loveliness is yet, and went not out
With one, however fair! Keep measure true,
Both voice and step; let every hand combine
By even clash and fingered stop to wake
The caverned echoes of harmonious mirth,
Till our delight becoming frenzied air
Our saddened one shall breathe it, and his soul
Inflame with high imaginings sublime."

Then madly ramped the God-directed dance,
Where ruddy bodies, circling shapes of white,
Sped round so fast, so swiftly glanced their feet,

That ruddy figures turned on gleaming limbs ;
And whirled on hairy legs the gleaming shapes,
While tangled raiment fluttering, intermixed
With floating hair, bright-hued, and many a spear,
Vine-clad, and harmless with fir-cone atop.
By glimpses seen, sliding in glittering curves,
Enamelled serpents mutely thrid the rout
Where growled the leopards to the panthers' snarl,
Or mumbled, over-rolled, and kicked at will.

The revel ceased and hung in silence, when
Silenus, rising slowly to his height,
Stretched forth his nerveless hands and cried
"Alas!
Alas for me if I must tear the threads
My sorrow weaves in pictures of the past!
For tho' my gladness changed and flashed to hate
And fell thro' fiery anguish to despair,

Yet these returning horrors oft intrude
Where day-long smiles gave day-long deep content;
And should I banish them for evermore,
Silenus would be other than himself.
"But Fate is hard. The greatest Gods are nought
Against the measure of resistless doom.
If now I must forget, thou seest me here,
O Dionysus, a resistless slave
From whom has fled the spring of enterprise,
Who must obey, but never more may rule."

"Awake, Silenus! In the future shine
Triumph and glory sprung of mighty deeds,
By the stern Gods approved. Strewn thro' the world
Are nations savage as their scouring wolves,
Famine-bedriven over icy plains,
Which we with high persuasive proof will front
And show them law yields fairer life than when

Revengeful men shed blood, or rob for greed ;
And with temptation of the luscious grape
We will enchant them into peaceful toil.
"At one deep draught now drain this cup divine
Down to its moon of gold. Leave not a drop,
For every drop is precious ; scarce unfit
To pass Athena's lips, when shouting She
Holds up Her shining nectar bowl and tells
Tidings of victory to feasting Gods !
"Each bloomed and purple grape was singly plucked,
Ere bursting ripe, by dainty-fingered nymphs ;
And these when heaped, by their own pressure shed
The wine you drink, fragrance and liquid sun.
"The cup you handle was Hephaestion's gift.
After his downfall, from Olympus hurled
By wrathful Zeus, I nourished him and gave
Reviving, warm, deep draughts of crimson wine.

Day after day I watched the cunning God
Fashion these nymphs who nursed me when a babe.
You see me heave to clutch the teasing bunch
One dangles playfully beyond my reach ;
While Hermes swings his nimble feet and smiles,
Amused to eye me as I jerk and crow.
His gift, embossed with playtime of my past,
Is thine, and thine this well-filled skin.
" When clouds
Darken and chill thy life, and memory
Of what is gone too bald and clearly stares
For steady gazing to endure, then drink !
When thou wouldst rise to action, but the heart
And limbs in languor hold thee back, then drink !
Pour thy libation when the dazzling rays
Of Hyperion to the zenith pierce ;
And when his light in mighty splendour sinks
At eventide again libation pour !
Worship the glorious God throughout the day,
So he may strengthen thee, and penetrate

Thy loitering blood, and drive dark dreams
away.
"I go; ere long returning I shall claim
Thy presence with me to the blustering North,
Where we, the vine our welcome, marching on,
Will with its tendrils link our prophecies
To rich abundant store in coming time;
And, thro' his appetite, tame savage man
To toil and tillage of the liberal earth."

Long after Dionysus and his rout
Had vanished, and the airy echoes ceased
Of distant laugh and thrilling cymbal-clash;
When noon, and brooding silence lay like
thought
On the green ocean of the woods afar,
Silenus still was standing, cup in hand,
Gazing, or as in gaze, on its device.
He had beheld the baby arms outstretched
To reach the dancing grapes a teasing nymph
Dangled in nearness never to be touched;

And this recalled a tale his Syrinx told:
How when a babe, fresh from her mother's arms,
She first stepped forth and walked. Lying one day
Within her father's orchard, on the grass,
Babbling to one drooped apple overhead,
Her mother noted how she fain would pull
The mellow prize, and plucked it from the bough;
Then, placing Syrinx on her little feet
Against the tree, went off a pace or two,
Holding the bright temptation nigh her reach.
To seize it in her eager hands the babe
Unconsciously moved forward step by step
After the wondering mother; who, enrapt,
Snatched up the child and kissed her out of breath.

Thereafter nestling in the flowers a faun
Came trotting where she lay, and offered fruit;

Which she, remembering Mother's hest, refused.
Whereat the wilful savage raging vowed
That eat she should, or he would ope her mouth
And force the fruitage down. She turned and fled,
The faun pursuing, to a rapid stream
Wherein she leaped. He, shrieking on the brink,
Stood pelting her with berries as she swam
And landed lightly on the other side.

Well he remembered how afresh each day
Her brightened countenance gave, mirror-like,
Clearly each varying passion he disclosed ;
And how she stored his sayings as the voice
Of Fate. How, by her graces overcome,
He would forget all beauty of the world
But hers; entranced, would hold her in his arms,
Smoothing her shapely form, from laughing throat
Down to her agile feet, and lingering long
On each bewitching beauty, tho' the next

Enticed with yet more captivating charm :
But this enjoyed, the last forsaken seemed
To tempt return with sweetness multiplied.

Love fondly strung these precious memories
Until the story was completed, when
The record fell, splashed into sudden night,
And Syrinx was no more.
Then yearningly
Recalling how the drowned to Hades pass
In pleasant dreams of early childhood days,
Syrinx he saw risen from the river-bed,
Ranging at will those happy times agone,
Till they two met ; and might, alas ! alas !
Never have parted, had not ruthless fate
Driven him unhappy into wilds remote.
Could even faithful love be mindful then,
The swift remorseless water sweeping by
Obliterating fast as fancies flew,
The overwhelming bliss and gracious light
Her trustful love and beauty were to him ;

And could she know what agony would burn
At loss of her, and take the bursting flame
And ashes of despair as sacrifice
His passion offered to her vanished grace?

Then, overborne by longing, sick for lack
Of hope, the blessed boon that haughty Zeus
Denies not to the restless race of earth,
Silenus sank in silence on the ground.
The drip of rocks anear, and running streams,
Hushed whispering of the forest overhead,
Soothed him to quietude and gentle sleep,
And zephyrs passing fanned him with their wings.

PART SECOND

BOOK I.

AGES had passed. Now was Silenus old,
And fallen from his glory. Bald his head ;
Its few gray locks lay loose and scantily ;
And gross, uncomely, his dishonoured form.
Those mighty limbs that bore him bound for bound
Alongside fleetest stag, now scarce endured
His shiftless ponderous weight without support
Of docile faun, or cymbal-clashing nymph ;
But in the thews that bound his slackened arms
Yet lingered force beyond the force of men ;
As Phormis, one hard shepherd of the hills,
Learned to his lifelong cost. For on a feast,
After the shearing, he, the clown, enraged

Silenus would not own his flock surpassed
Lycaon's flock, in brute audacity
Spurned with his foot the fallen Demigod,
Who, gentle as milch kine, or bleating lamb,
Flamed in red wrath at such despite against
His sunken state ; the cruel foot straight seized,
And, for a deadly moment, in his arms
Pulsed their primeval strength. Lifting his hand,
Hard-clenched, he smote the caitiff on his knee,
Crushing both bone and sinew into pulp ;
And ever after on a crutch the churl
Limped out his days ; his withered limb a sight
Shepherd and maiden loathed. Vexatious boys
Threw stone or clod, inviting him to run
And chase them, crying, "Catch me if you can!"
Silenus had obeyed the God of Wine.
Too aptly had he in his dolorous mood
Worshipped the fragrant drops of Lethe calm ;

And succour, used beyond necessity,
Changed to an enemy within the wall
That unsuspected wrought his overthrow.

Tho' ofttimes he with Dionysus ranged
Countries where demons of outrageous shape,
Enshrined in sullen richness, ruled as Gods,
His ringing exhortation no more flew
Winging the God's intent, and winningly
Soothing ferocious gaze to droop-eyed peace ;
Inspiring men by fervid influence
To shun accustomed evil and reproach.

Now, as an aged hound, he hung upon
His well-loved master's footsteps, and had died
Were he forbidden this old privilege.

Tho' now no more he shook uncultured wilds
With great pulsations like a thunderous dawn
Of sunflame woven in tempestuous glare,
That frets with fire the rim of drifting gloom ;
Still, from the charm of constant wont was he
A presence so familiar there had clung

Some haunting sense of need unsatisfied
Had the march lacked his towering merriment.

Moon following moon beheld Silenus lost
In torpor, steadfast, like a willow trunk
Casting its image in the shimmering stream.
But, when again with living things awake,
His spirit gazed as from a lonely star.

When, stored the vintages, the mirth leaped free ;
At rites of death, or feasts of marriages ;
When troubles fled the charging revelry,
And bowls were filled until the world flew round,
Smiling he shone the guest predominant.
Rough rivals plied the frequent bowl he drained,
Until from his unsteady hold the wine
Erringly soaked his beard, and crimsoned down
His spacious body wasteful to the ground :
Then he would sing, and shout, and prophesy.

The hinds enchanted ever all agape,
Eyeballs wide-showing, pressed an eager crowd,
Noisily claiming he should tell their fates.

"Your fates ye seek, ye knaves and coarse-skinned clowns!
Ha! ha! This Zeus Himself was hot to learn
Of great Prometheus, hating whom He fixed
In chains on Caucasus, with bird of hell
To tear him in eternal agony.
What for long ages Zeus so vainly sought
Ye would, O modest ones of crook and goad,
Have at a word, ha! ha!
"Ply the cup, ply!
Slack not the pouring, ye shall have reward
Fate flashing madly off at every point,
Like doves, when feeding they behold a hawk!
Fate running from my lips; tears from mine eyes
Tight-squeezed from lengthened laughter ceasing not

Will fluster you to such bewilderment
Ye shall not know if flowering mead ye tread
Where airs immortal breathe, or if ye pace
A pathway downward to the hideous gate
Of Hades beyond Styx.

"Ye are unversed
In oracles, O ye of herds and sheep,
And likewise swine; each moving patiently
To taste the shambles as his lord directs.

"When first ye feel the axe, or entering knife,
Dread no frustration; knowledge surely comes
When life's dark mystery is thus resolved!

"Storms hurt you not so thick your hairy hides!
Dull, disregardful; eating steadily
Throughout your placid lives, what moves you now
Keen to unriddle Fate, forecasting doom?

"That doom is ye shall love with love profound
Your own dear selves and all you call your own;

And from that worship never shall ye swerve
Toward deed of grace, or any kindly thought,
Unless advantage largely sanctify.
"When Bion would with sweet Idyia toy,
No scruple shall corrupt his bliss. Tho' scorn
May hunt her shame to solitary haunts;
What matters! Snapped its stem the flower will fade,
And other flowers smile welcome on the way;
They have no voice in their own choosing, yet
Breathe sweetness blushing when their sweets are plucked,
And breathing sweets blush when we pass them by.
"Staunchly wilt thou uphold thy friend while he
Toils faithfully to shape thy purposes;
But if of thee unmindful, his desires
Wing him to interest apart from thine,
Straightway he falls an outcast from thy love,
A useless alien or an enemy!

"When multiplied your fathers' flocks and herds ;
Corn, oil, and wine in vast abundancy ;
Tho' every cup be filled to overflow,
Insatiate ye shall hanker for the whole ;
Wondering what age, with aches and shrivelled stoop,
Enjoys to make it obstinately cling
To government, prerogative of strength !
"The laws forbid. Else in old bygone time,
Dim stories run, the worn were helped away ;
And Nature aided in the going out,
As she is aided in the coming in.
The earth hates cumber. Ah, those ancient days
When our forefathers by rude wisdom led
Measured their usage by necessity ;
Direct in every movement, unperplexed !
"As ye your fathers your own sons, full-grown,

Cresting the heights will proudly stand and watch
Your feeble footsteps totter on the slope.
Memory then flaunts bright visions of your prime,
What time you watched your fathers' faltering pace,
And these cheer not the dangerous passages,
As on ye plod in grisly darkness down.
"Beyond, your immortality shall munch
Immeasurable husks; or bleating shall
Wandering on dim illimitable plains
Appeal to emptiness with plaintive cry.
"From boundless herds such bellowing shall scare
The shivering spectres, they shall dread return
To fret and anguish of mortality,
While ye, the weak ones, hover timidly
For ever round impenetrable fruit;
Watching the baser strive in vain to seize
Bright creatures winged with beauty and surprise!

"But why foreshadow thus? These darkling
jests
Make the Olympians laugh; that sheep and
swine,
And horned oxen mimic freakish man,
Who does himself grotesquely imitate
The stately pace of Gods!
"I would delight
My jolly shepherds with a dance of joy,
But these old bones now fail me: once I could
From rock to rock leap and not fear a fall.
Now I can only drink and prophesy!
"But gather round me; for I yet can sing
How liberal wine amends the bitter wrong
Closed in with life, and unescapeable."

"How dark and strange the uttered words
of Fate!"
Whispered the herds. "We are we know not
what;
And wend we know not where. Maybe unmeet

Mortals should know of more than mortal life ;
Therefore he utters mysteries for fear
We might be mazed, and, into madness driven,
Work fell destruction. He would save from ruin,
As Zeus for love had fain withheld the fire
Of living glory when for love He went
To Semele. Then let us all affect
To track and catch his drift, lest telling more
He stagger us with more than we can bear.
He told of jests that wake Olympian mirth ;
Join then in laughter ; marry with his mood."

The Satyrs, shepherds, clowns, a motley herd
Crowding Silenus round, in one huge roar
Joined laughter, shock on shock, peal after peal,
Till the mad air was frantically rent.
With laughter loud his glowing body heaved
Incessant. High his voice above the rest,
As 'mid the thrilling chatter starlings make
Pierces a falcon's scream.

The lusty nymphs
Tore their wild hair; plucked their loose raiment free,
Casting the coloured cloudlets in the air,
And seizing each a partner, whirling round,
Threw out their limbs in random unison
At poise on tightened toes. While bending low,
Pairs sprang together mimicking wild beasts
Catching their prey; or, stooping heads to butt
Each others' breasts, the nymphs fell sadly mauled;
Their bosoms, tenderer than satyr horn
Or the hard brow of lout, ached from the blows;
Well pleased to rest they round Silenus closed,
Awaiting till his song came rolling forth.

"Ye red-faced satyrs, all come drink to me;
Your wine-skins shoulder, fill the bowls.
Take one deep draught to warm your souls;
Squat snug on your haunches or on bended knee:

Raise your arms; shout a song: praise wine
the divine!

"Praise wine. Tho' we gasp when we first draw
breath,
We suck life anew from the breast;
And milk is good, red wine is best;
For red wine wrests a breathing time from death.
Raise your arms; shout a song: praise wine
the divine!

"Sad for woman when her own lord is slain;
For hopeless the loss she bewails.
Tho' hopeless, when all comfort fails
Red wine takes the place where her lord has
lain.
Raise your arms; shout a song: praise wine
the divine!

"Lowly wine whispers soft words of delight,
Innocently fondling her charms.

From dreams she wakes, within her arms,
Lo, holding a new hero strong and bright!
Raise your arms; shout a song: praise wine
the divine!

"Lover, so wretched for his faithless Bliss,
He would lie in the grave at peace.
Wine brings a cup and sorrows cease
As true Love clasping gives delicious kiss.
Raise your arms; shout a song: praise wine
the divine!

"Weak and strong wine cheers; the young and
the old;
Makes valour do all valour can;
Transforms the coward to a man,
Who then draws his sword like a warrior bold.
Raise your arms; shout a song: praise wine
the divine!"

To his full lips the rich Hephaestion cup

Lifting, Silenus drained its splendour void.
A deed so noble fired with zeal the rest,
Who emptied theirs in glorious sympathy ;
When cheerily again Silenus sang.

"Who would his flocks and people save,
And stands to fight in battle brave ;
What should he meet
If he retreat
Beat back by overwhelming foes?
A crown of myrtle mixed with rose,
And cup of the reddest grape that grows!

"One who by words and shifty wiles
His true friend's love for him beguiles ;
Our scorn to show
What best to throw
Over the head that brings disgrace?
The due of cheater false and base,
A cup of sour wine dashed in his face!

"Then rash and foolish wine's abuse;
For good and bad wine has its use.
This cheers the brave;
That slights the knave.
And merit more who can desire
Than raising hero's glory higher,
And giving the cheat a bed of fire?"

Again the shepherds muttering,
"What know we
Of cheat or hero? If we can we steal
Our neighbour's sheep, and swear it was the wolves;
Which is fair honest stealing. But to clip
A wolf, and clothe a wolf, and pass it off
A sheep, is downright cheating, and denounced
Of every shepherd lad. Well, heroes, they
Are well enough in stories women tell
To tickle gaping babies after dusk;
But fighting, save in anger, we despise:—
Hush! for Silenus tones in lower strain."

"How sweet, when memory fades with closing eyes
And wings of blessed Sleep
Fan into slumber deep,
When, hand in hand, happy and loverwise
We roam at will the vales of paradise.

"Then Sleep puts her soft cheek against mine own;
Or, eyes to eyes content
In peaceful wonderment,
We list the flowers by whispering zephyr blown
Trembling in music hitherto unknown:

"Or from the margin of deep water gaze
As rising Naiad there
Wimples her yellow hair
To hide faint blushes when her hand she lays
In mine, while kissing me in calm amaze.

"In calm amaze I should have truant played,
So lonely long while she,

Perplexed awaiting me,
Questioned the rill for tidings, sore afraid
I might await her lonely in the shade.

"But ere my tale of absence I narrate
She throws the moonbeam charms
Of her long loving arms
About me, murmuring, Tho' thou comest late
I own myself Sleep, Naiad, Love, and Fate!"

"Silenus maunders," growled the listeners;
"Singing of sleep foreshadows weariness.
Let us now lead him to his sleeping-place,
That he may rest.
"Ah! Look! The water runs
From his old eyes; but not in laughter now.
His face down 'twixt his knees; both hands upon
His head as tho' it ached!
"These Demigods

Are mysteries. With half the wine he drank
A mortal had been merry ; not so he.
Despairing, dolorous he looks ; and shakes
With sobs, as children sob when harshly chid.
Mayhap his second childhood comes apace,
And stress of singing songs o'ermasters him !"

As chilled the waning riot with its King,
His mirth in some dark sorrow quenched, the throng,
Then dwindling fast away, soon vanished, save
Unswerving nymphs and shepherds who upheld
His listless heavy bulk and lumbering feet
To his soft bed of fern, laid dry, compact,
By tending maidens ; whereon, overthrown
With skins that once clad savage beasts of prey,
Silenus sank ; but, struggling against sleep,
He turned uneasily ; then pausing glared
At unseen foe ; unaided, sprang upright !
Then, stretching back his right arm suddenly,

Amid loose straw there dangling from the thatch,
As tho' about to hurl some mighty spear,
He shouted,

"Demon, not the thunderbolts
Of all Olympus shall protect thee now!
To carrion will I slaughter thee and glut
Wild wolves when maddened with mandragora!
As nothing else, not vulture's stenchy maw,
Could gorge such foulness as thine evil flesh.
"But no! For death might be a resting-place;
And I would have on thee the deadliest curse!
Therefore live on. Live to feel what thou art;
Then live thou on for ever! This thy doom."

The maids and shepherds huddling crouched aghast,
Beholding him distraught; great eyes aflame;

And his whole stature red in furnace-glow ;
With voice of lion hungry and enraged
Stifling the air grown heated like a den.
They knew not what would save themselves, or aid
Their Lord ; but while they cowered, hesitating,
He on his bed fell down and spake no more.

Timidly then they prop his wreathless head
And languid arms. They watch him till he sleeps
Making hoarse thunder with an even breath.

BOOK II.

"HAVING beheld thy lustrous countenance
How have I, great Athena, fallen and sinned!
Once to have felt Thy smile; calm, less severe
Than so divinely true, that Cytherea's
Before it pales as starlight in the morn;
And shameless afterward breathe like a beast
Knowing no purpose but his mate and food!

"Beneath Thine azure gaze all troubles cease;
And hopelessly confused entanglement
Opens to clearness like a simple flower.

"My face withdrawn from Wisdom's smile, I lay
Befooled by sorrow, useless as a bow
Drawn by some hasty hand and overstrained.

"By Thy resplendency in olden time

I wrought with Dionysus in wild lands
To give men safety by well-ordered ways ;
Enriching to content with fruit and corn
Strange peoples, rough and turbulent, who knew
No law but will, no pity more than fire
From tempest hurled at random throughout space.
Then toiling dawn as restful eve was sweet ;
Then sang the whole great dome of day for joy ;
From darkness shone the glory of the stars.

"Athwart my glory swept a blighting wind,
That fouled the air with murky hate and death
And evil-doing ; and dismayed I fell
Adown the deep inevitable past ;
When, bracing up my being, unto Thee
I should have turned for succour and for strength.

"As Dionysus taught, so mixed was mine
With fleeting life, the mortal weighed me down :
Lacking meanwhile Thy presence and Thine aid,
I never rose again to God-like state.

Now feeding lowly wants, I dwell amid
Coarse satyrs, coarser clowns of sheep and herds;
Drinking the grape for comfort and a cloud
To cover horrors past. Thus, having grown,
Wasteful and aimless, to unwieldy shape;
With scarce the power of motion save to hold
The well-filled cup that swells but keeps me down,
The grossest churls grin, urging me to sing
Ribald and wanton tunes for their disport.
And they would make me dance, but well they know
Unknitted my frail joints; I shout instead,
And chant them prophecies about themselves
They do not understand. For while the heat
Burns in me, they all change to sudden sheep,
And kine, and snarling beasts; or things that pierce
To suck the juice of fruit.

"How changed, alas!

From that Silenus whose long spear in weight
Equalled the spear of Ares; who could wrench
A rooted ash out from the solid ground,
And slay a monster at a single blow.
Who half a summer day could hold enthralled,
By exhortation unto deeds of worth,
A fierce innumerable multitude!

"Now, tarnished, bloat Silenus will be borne
In tales, thro' lapses of far time to come,
As a great wine-skin gurgling laughter-noise
That made dull shepherds dance. For shallow gaze
On some poor failing dwells and sees the whole,
Tho' but a halt upon his lengthened march
Whose movements were of God-like stateliness,
Abundant in fair issues of delight.
Let man once stumble, or forget; once err
From weakness, or fierce passion's goad, the fault,
Alone remembered, wings his cruel fame;
His worth all cancelled, or uncredited!

The splendour of Hephaestion's skill forgot,
Each scornful tattler gossips of his hurt.
The God who makes the thunderbolts of Zeus
Is known to mortals as the God that limps!

"As I by mortal thraldom am debased
Below the brute, ah! never more to rise,
I would with mine own degradation cease.
No longer shaming the Divinity
From whom I sprang; or as a shameless lure
To mimicry, when rightly I should flame
A fiery signal warding dangerous steeps
About whose feet wreck and wild billows play.

"O Pallas! Great Athena! Wisdom's self!
We know Thy sure unswerving course, unchecked,
Speeds to an aim Thyself alone canst see;
Unheeding mortals, save a gracious glance
Occasionally cast, which they perverse
Strain utmost wilfulness to blink; and hate

Even to slaughter and dark dungeon walls,
Thy worshipper who lauds the light divine.
"What comes so sadly and so dear to most
Disquiets not the passionless repose,
Marking Thy mien all other Gods above.
Canst Thou look downward from that lofty height
Regarding me with other than cold scorn?
If tenderness of perfectness is part,
Thine eyes may pityingly upon me fall,
And in their radiance I may cease to be!"

"A babe," spake Pallas, "beauty in thee moved
Immeasurable joy; the idlest note
Enticed thee, as a gaudy Western sky
At eventide some careless shepherd boy,
Lost and enraptured in its golden light,
His flock neglected wandering wide astray.
"Thou didst, while drifting into sidelong ways,

Pursue delusive splendour that delayed
And frittered thy advance ; and courage failed
When halting thou beheldst the scanty space
Trod by thy footsteps in the vanished time.

"Ill portioned and ill mixed thy nature held
Too much of heaven's fire to herd with men ;
Too little for the Gods. Hopeless to find
An equal, and thence loving, as thou didst,
A forest nymph, to make the balance true,
More than was fitting gavest her of thyself,
And losing her wast dragged so nigh to death
Thou couldst not spring to healthy poise again.

"Instead of nymph hadst thou a Goddess loved
She might have scorned thee ; and in fierce despair
Thou hadst, as conqueror, destroyed with fire,
As now with revelry and crimson wine.

"Save Zeus my Father and loved Hebe, none
Of Gods divine have ever touched my hand ;
Nor great Prometheus whom I loved and took

Within my shield and guarded him against
The Horrors vigilant, that, hid or seen,
Beset Olympian fire, when bent on theft
He dared encounter them for love of man.
"But thou in thy intent hast guileless been ;
Whose fair young love was torn and crushed as life
Unfolded in her to the perfect flower ;
Thou in thine innocence a helpless babe
Shalt clasp my hand ; and, as I lead thee hence,
Thou shalt, tho' late, enjoy the blessed peace
Found but within my guard.
"Strange is thy Fate !
As one great star, beyond thy sight remote,
Ringed by lone splendour in the space of worlds,
Encircled has thy being been with love !
And, as that splendour to the central orb,
It never nears but moves for ever round,
Thy passion is to thee !"

"O Goddess dread!
And yet I dread Thee not. My hand in Thine,
I seem an infant led. That haunting fear
Of dire and unimaginable wrong,
Hovering malign for the appointed swoop,
Is past. Around is calm, and hope beyond."

"Thou art, Silenus, now within the light
Of life. In joyful ease they dwell who tread
The ground that bears thee now; and spirits here,
Unmixed with transient offspring of decay,
Presenting aspects perfect to themselves,
Are pure in sympathy with all around.
"Behold these graceful reeds that waving turn
Their edges to the breeze. Thy Syrinx dwells
Within them, they are she. The water-flags,
With purple candour gazing to thy gaze,
Asking thy love, are Leto. Loving thee
She pined to death; and dying hoped to grow
In stately water-flags anear her friend,

The graceful Syrinx whom on earth she loved.
"Will but to see them in their mortal guise,
Lo, they appear! Behold them bending low
To thee, as thou art bending low to them!
"Tall Eriphia whom thou loved'st to watch
Because her movements had the measured charm
Of music when innumerable leaves
Sing their thanksgiving with the wind of heaven,
Loftily now she droops in yonder birch,
Fingering delightedly released perfumes
That pause in lingering eddies on their way.
"Here are no wooings as on earth are known;
Each spirit here loves all, and all love each;
Those who fulfil their lives are here and blessed;
The base as base remain resolved to earth,
Becoming food and mansion of the worm.
"When here perfection ripens, new desire,
Breaking its bounds, attains sublimer worlds
And rarer fineness in the living air,
And inspiration, throbbing passionately,

Joins in the music of the sounding spheres!

"That spheral region is remote from this
Far as thou now art from thy slumbering form
Breathing hoarse thunder in the midnight gloom
That shudders at the sound. Thou wilt awake
Believing this to be a sleep of dreams.
Ere entering again that house of flesh,
First learn thy fate from me:

"No evil aim
Has stained thy soul that weakness has debased,
And, tho' to others thou hast been a bane,
It was by ways unmeant. Therefore dread not
Fire of exasperate wrath; nor Furies' scourge
Of serpents, poison-fanged, more than thou fear'st
An azure noon, or love-sick nightingale
Warbling his ardour to the evening breeze.

"Piercing the dimmest future thou canst reach,
Thou seest thyself a wine-skin gurgling mirth,
Jeered and bemocked by unborn multitudes.

Comfort thyself in weakness. Thou canst see
Into the cycles of immensity,
Compared with vision of Olympian Gods,
About so far as might a sparrow hop
Against my Father's eagle at his speed.
"In punishment thy name will bear the weight
Of well-deserved reproach thro' countless years.
But years will end: bright wilt thou reappear
Purged of thy grossness; splendid, as when she,
Syrinx, beheld thee hurl thy mighty spear.
For truth is strong, and, when unclouded, rules
Omnipotent. Men's ignorance and guile
Are ofttimes clad in adamantine scales,
Impenetrable as this golden mail
Guarding my breast; dashed from the arc of which
A God-hurled thunderbolt would fly in dust
Leaving assault no hope. Impregnable
May error be against attack without;
Corrupt within it loosens into ruin.

"Doubt not thy gentle life and storied woe
Will soften harsh decree and conquer love.
Then courage! Dread no more! Pursue thy
Fate!
I shall be nigh thee in thine hour of need!"

BOOK III.

COME hoofs, come heels, and wine-skins ; cow-horns come !
Your spry goats leave to browse the vine, or leap
In airy arches over clefted rocks ;
But come you hither, hoist the fir-cone high !

On thymy hills, O shepherds, leave your flocks,
Of mellow-fleece, and bleating let them feed
The breezy down ; or, if on roving bent,
Let them seek humid nooks of greenest growth.
Doubt not of increase ; their own crook-horned lords
Have keen espial for the ewes' retreat !
Your spears becrimsoned by the sneaking wolf,
Array in ivy or the looser vine ;

With fir-cone guard their whetted perilous blades;
Commanding victory, we with juicy grape
Offer the cup but hide the pointed steel!

Blare horns, crash cymbals, shrill the double pipe:
Yell satyrs; bellow fauns; and shriek ye nymphs!
Leaving the swollen udders to their chance
Of wasteful galaxy-besprinkled grass,
As homeward kine low for the milker's hands.

Tarry no longer by the rills to braid,
Devices freaking your inwoven mats,
With clustered seeds that crest the pointed rush,
O clear-eyed Naiads cool! Haste, come with us,
And show wild people how divinely pure
The shapeliness of those who tend the vine!

Now wends great Dionysus North away
Thro' regions where loud torrents round the rock,
Grinding with thunderous roar its rapid sides,
And, shattering down in cataracts of foam,
Shine forth in wonder, dazzling, iris-spanned,
Of every hue the flowers of summer yield.
He the gay God will lead adventuring feet
And overcome whatever dangers lurk
Of hunger, crouching beast, and raging storm,
Or fury of surprised revengeful man!

Then leave, ye loveliest, your tended bees
To revel on their honey for a while.
Sweetest of sweets new honey from the comb;
But sweeter yet the sweet of hoarded toil,
Gathered unceasingly through burdened hours
Eyed by keen hunger armed with threatening beak.
Then let the little toilers feast their fill!

Athena gave the olive. Wisely ye
The oil expressed pour into slender jars
With lengthened ears that they may hear the rat,
Or any two-legged robber coming nigh.
But if your oil they rob then let them rob:
Better oil wasted than yourselves should lose
The show of thronging people mad for joy,
Falling adown in worship of the vine!
Then hasten forth to join the fir-coned spears!

Be tempted, O ye Dryades, a while.
Quit the gnarled safety of your shadowy homes,
They were but acorns in the ancient days,
What time Zeus, nurtured in the mountain cave,
Lay hid from Cronos, child-devouring Sire.
Leave beech and birch, cold ash, and broad-leaved plane,
Ye who can battle with the wintry storm,
And dropping summer garments, lithe and bare,
Resist the strength and teeth of Boreas!

In vain we hail the Hamadryades ;
For each, where her twin leaflets broke the soil,
Lingers contented on the self-same spot.

Placid Limniades persuade to move,
And for a while forego their heavenward gaze.
Assure them heaven is more benign than vast,
And will again their steadfastness requite
When they returning reassume the watch
Of changing glories thro' the day and night.
For Dionysus plans his march to glow
And gleam with nymphs of river, lake, and wood,
In beauty unconfused.

Come Oreads,
From mountain heights descending : primrose hair
Borne out from rosy features either side,
Quivering like wings that tremble with a song !
Sing to us of great chasms, thunder-split ;

Of tempest warfare making noontide black,
Till spent it bursts in sudden torrents down
Sweeping hillsides with all their pines away!
Ye bright ones, tell of lofty things afar,
Stern eagles in their solitary haunts;
Why they on splintered points a livelong day
Blink satisfied and silent in the sun?
And tell us why they ring the mountain-world
Ere swooping downward on a destined aim.

Tho' coy the Nereids, in beauty proud,
No garments vex the movement of their charms,
Whereon the favoured eyes would love to dwell,
But, ever baffled by the waves and flash
Of sparkling foam, brief glimpses only catch;
And only mortal high, heroical,
Was ever blessed by Nereid's embrace;
As Peleus, who, by Thetis loved, became
Father of great Achilles whose renown
Went level with the Gods'. Ah! they could
tell

Of wonders in the blue Aegean sea ;
Of caverns where green monsters ruby-eyed,
Guard jewels heaped and sprinkled on the floor,
Crushed gems compounded into glittering sand
In times of Chaos ere the Gods were born.
But they forsake not their own watery world,
Or make brief pauses by the shelving shore
To snood their brine-drenched locks, or watch the sails
Buoyant on dancing laughter-loving waves.

Great daughters of the ancient Power that clasps
The rounded earth, the Oceanides ;
Beyond the flight of hope to waken them !
In vast Atlantic water leave them still
And undisturbed, awaiting Fate when hence ;
In some dim future yet inscrutable,
They shall behold their billows thronged with fleets

Innumerable, as wild-fowl in their haunt
At breeding time on lonely island mere.

Who would be laggard in a God's advance,
Remaining fixed as flowers however fair?
When she might wander with the nightingales,
Who fly from land to land and loudly sing
Of fairest bloom and all the woodland joy
Their tender gaze collects in passing by.

What can smile lovelier than a Naiad's lot,
Whose springs well rippling from the coolest depth!
Thro' creviced rock she sees them ever drip
And run atwixt moist stones beneath the grass.
The grasses spreading finger-tips to feel
Unceasing motion thrill them, while the flow
Quiveringly carries on the lustrous day
Thro' sweeps of open space, to wind along
Rich tillage patched with store by homes of men;

And widening out, far-spreading, reach on reach,
Commingles lastly with the sounding sea!

If she, the dainty and the pure, forego
Fixed contemplation of her sacred charge,
To follow Dionysus' crowded march;
Who will, regardless of triumphant chance,
Here linger, conquered by the cark and fret
Of little earthly cares?

Sound high the shell!
Raise voice and spear; move forward foot and
hoof:
Astound the silence of the sleeping hills,
And make the forest shiver with your shouts!

BOOK IV.

FORECASTING victory lolled the vintage God,
The languid-eyed and smooth-limbed son of Zeus,
Great Dionysus on his tiger huge;
Whose silent glide of pliant-pacing feet
Seemed rather drift of undulating flame
Than crafty brute compact of bone and thews.
By fierceness fiercer than the tiger's own,
Artaxeres, an orient Prince, had tamed
Its savage temper to obedience.
Grateful for fellowship and wisdom learned
Of Dionysus, for the priceless vine
Imparted to his people, he had given
As boon his fondled treasure, now subdued;
Soothed to such gentle gait the God could sit

The dreaded back holding his cup so brimmed
A bubble setting threatened overflow,
And bring to lip without a wasted drop!

Now marched he in the rude Edone's land,
Ruled by Lycurgus, grim flesh-loving King,
Who, hating grain and oil and every fruit,
Loathed most the tempting clusters of the vine,
Whence oozed the red abominable juice
That fires man's brain to waste, and taints his blood
So thick with foulness, dimmed, his eyesight fails
To wing an easy arrow to its aim.
The King bound every man to bow and spear;
Flouting the texture of the tedious loom,
For clothing of the beasts; man's pride to seize
And privilege to wear! Girt by his throng
Of worshippers, all guardians of the grape,
Divinely tranquil Dionysus passed,
Trampling thro' open plot of dazzling flowers
His multitude left crushed; athwart broad shade

Mottled by winks of sun, and hovering glints ;
Across clear streams their crowding footsteps left
Puddled to muddy swamp. On one side hung
Pale purple mountains ranged along the North,
And, sounding near, glittered the azure sea.
The rolic followers, shouting on their march,
Roused to its secret dells the forest depth,
Where panthers slunk close listening in their lairs ;
While fast the rabbit lay, and murderous stoat
About to spring, curled smit with sudden fright ;
Small songsters diving sank among the leaves,
And eagles screaming winged inland afar.

The God's intent, gift of the precious vine,
And needful revelation with his boon,
Time, soil, and season ; how to train the shoots,
Nip wasteful buds, and note the ripening prime ;
How best make ready for the vintaging
The jars befitting wine ; or, stored in skins

The gums protecting best from soak and loss ;
All wanted for its use ; the God's intent
Suffered an overwhelming swift defeat
In slaughter, horror, and a field of blood !

The Gods themselves, scanning events to come,
May see with vision blurred ; or make a lapse
In sequence and mistake the drift. The stars
May not in orbits self-determined roll,
But swayed by other stars perform their parts.
And Dionysus, late triumphantly
Returning victor from the teeming East,
There having cast the tendrilled witchery,
Enthralling peoples with the conquering vine,
Assured and satisfied beheld success
Upon the people of Lycurgus, King,
As he would meditate a cup inwrought
With forms by great Hephaestion, for the play
And action of their shapes divine.

As soon
Had he imagined those bright forms could turn
Storming upon him in an ash-faced rage,
Ferocious, uncontrollable, as gift
So rich in promise scornfully refused!
While meditating fondly his great boon,
A sharp and distant din he heard; and cries
From many quarters, lengthened shouts that swelled
And gathered, like the tempest from the hills
Sucked down the valley round the log-built town,
That threw blank chill and silence on his host.

Now, flashing thro' the stormy darkness, bursts
A glittering stream of spears, guided by him,
Swiftly in measured paces step for step,
The grim Edonean King, whose head unhelmed
In his wild haste discloses burning hate
At deadly heat blanching his countenance.

He faces Dionysus. When the King,
Holding his spears, that shivered in their haste
For sharp assault, made fell assail by fierce
Impoisoned words barbed with disdain, the God
Saw a great beast aroused too strong to slay,
And strove by promises of sweet account,
In brief recital of his purposes,
To win acceptance for the precious grape.

But the king's hate had rooted into life,
And grown throughout his being, as the veins
That pulsed a net of movement thro' his frame;
And wasteful as to woo a hurricane
Laden with blight to spare the buds of spring,
Is strife with enmity at highest tide.

If in fulfilment even Gods may fail,
Thwarted by force unknown or unforeseen,
Malign, and not regarded; how shall man

Not stumble and halt, perplexed in ignorance,
Checked before sheer unfathomable chasms
Across the followed pathway to his hope?

Quivering, teeth-set, Lycurgus, in his hate
Of Dionysus, terror-stricken lest
The God on his stern people breathe the taint
He dreaded mostly, worship of the vine,
Scarce deigned him breathing-time, ere shrieking loud
He charged with every spear the helpless host,
And baulked escape by sending nimble bows
To hold the seaward road.
Arose a scream
Of piteous, shrill, unutterable woe,
As struck their entered flesh the shock of spears!
Yells, arrows, blows, spear-thrusts, derisive taunts
Mixed to a storm of rage, beating in waves
Successive, fiercer each, urged by the King,
Whose wrath was lighted into lurid smile,
Beholding where the baffled God withdrawn

Scaled a steep rock hard by, and uttered words
Of doom.

But exultation changed anon,
When ceasing Dionysus hurled his spear,
Fluttering in vine-leaves, thro' the metal shield,
Firm breast and sinewy shoulder, crushing thro'
The strong bladebone beyond, leaving the King
Becrippled in his savage power, reserved
For deadlier fate than death from wound of spear!
Then from the lofty crag the God adown
Plunged headlong in the sea.

Lycurgus now,
Maddened by anguish into fury, blared
For slaughter, while he urged them not to spare
One that might wag a future tongue and say
He saw a King in Thrace smitten by spear
Tricked in the juggling leafage of the vine!
While faster flowed the victims' blood, their shrieks

More loudly filled the vacancy of heaven
Appealing to the Gods.
Silenus heard,
And, roused from heavy dreams that held him bound
And stupefied in some oblivious world
Throughout the fearful fortune of the day,
Rose like a lion with a rolling roar,
Thundering above the havoc, and appalled
The slaughterers to wondering pause, while hung
Trembling the reddened blades spell-bound in air.

"Ye murderers," cried he, "degraded slaves,
Doing the bidding of a brutish King
Who knows nor cares for either right or wrong;
Forbidding you the treasure we had brought
Of riches, peace, and laws to govern you!
We offer you the wisdom and the fruit
Thousands have bent their toiling lives to find
Thro' generations aided by the Gods,
Which ye refuse, and welcome us with death!

"Oh Dryantiades, what a fate is thine!
Fell, grisly son of wrath and vengeance thou!
Flesh-tearing wolf in human form! The wolves,
Thy kin, await the feast of mangled limbs
Wild horses on Pangaeum's mount shall wrench
Asunder from thy carcase shuddering,
When they, these murderers, know thy crime has lain
Stark barrenness accursed upon their land!
"That day thy fetters, forged of brightest gold
And silver melted from the mountain-side,
Shall mock the trailing glories of the rose
Blossoming there on thy death-spot, O King!
"Thine is a fate so horrible that death
In ghastliest imaginable shape
Shall seem a blessed boon beyond thy hope!
Mad shalt thou be! And maddened by the vine!
Thy lifelong horror shall around thee cling
So close its leaves shall taint thine every meal,

And canopy thy dreams; until the world
Shall seem to thee but one grape-bearing stem,
Which 'tis thy burdened duty evermore
To hack at and to hew. And thou shalt find
That, fast as thou mayst cut, the dream-vine grows
Yet faster. Thou unable to descry
Man's form from that of trees, shalt hack and hew
The limbs of Dryas, thine own son, and slay
Him who by thee of all was best beloved!
"But hark; the thunder! Speaks the voice of Zeus!"

Then harshly yelled the King, "Enough! Enough!
A foolish spear driven thro' me should suffice
Without the plague of hearing evil things
Prophesied on myself! The voice of Zeus;
Ha! Ha! Among our hills the thunders dwell
Wanting no Zeus to aid in utterance.

Of these parts I am Zeus! Thou callest me
wolf!
What I call thee soon shalt thou hear, ha! ha!
And mayhap feel the truth.
"Stand forth there bows!
In that huge wine-bag plant me fifty shafts
That I may fairly name him porcupine
Bristling in fear to hold us all aloof."

The bowmen notched the arrows on the
strings
And raised their bows to aim; but, ere they
drew
Their shafts back to the head, Silenus cried,

"Stay, murderers, and blood-stained savage
wolf!
It were but trifling sport to rend thine arm
From out its socket and to splash thy brains
Scattering upon the earth. Thy bows and spears
But merest straw to fence thee from my rage

Were I so willed to slay. But thou art doomed
To darker fate than any death from me!
For when thou hast thine only son destroyed
Thy reason will return. Then shalt thou know
Thy loss! The curse stern Gods have laid on thee,
Thy country's barrenness, thy people's wrath,
The fierce wild horses, and the golden chains!
"Thy Father's voice, O great Athena! Hear
Thy worshipper. This is his hour of need!"

While spoke the Demigod crashed thunder burst,
Blazing one instant in stupendous glare,
With sound, as water singing in descent;
With smell of burning hides; and all was dark.

BOOK V.

No lowly offered roses at the shrine
Of Aphrodite can more richly bloom
Than these, Silenus, we have brought to grace
The rock that guards thine honoured bones.

Long years
Our vines have blossomed, set, and grown to fruit;
The vintages been gathered, drunk the wine;
But thou art still the loss we must bemoan
As on that fearful day of blood and fire,
When, Dionysus driven into the sea,
And thou alone didst face the evil King.

Our life-blood ran in streams, till thou wert roused,
And thy voice rang like thunder from the hills
And stayed the slaughter; when the slaughterers
Paused in their pastime, like affrighted ghosts,
As thou didst tell the King his dreadful doom
Of madness, fury, murder of his child;
And reason waking on the deed of blood.
Well couldst thou read the future; pace by pace
The Furies have fulfilled thy prophecy;
The barren country; and the people's wrath
Bursting in vengeance on the King accursed.
And when upon thee fifty points were bent,
Thy voice again in thunder stayed their hands;
Shook the black vault of heaven, brought thunders down,
Where wonderstruck, in blinding fire, we saw
Pallas Athena, spear and shield outspread,
And heard Her mighty voice.
And when the gloom
Had passed away, with horror we beheld

The fifty bowmen fifty blackened heaps ;
While thou wert lying as a babe asleep
Smiling on mother's lap, without a wound
From shaft or spear, or stain of thunder-fire.
But they had seen the Gorgon shield and turned
To hard black stones and sunk into the soil ;
For no one could be found to bury them ;
And some say vaguely nothing now remains :
Tho' no one knows for no one goeth nigh.
The flash that slew the fifty felled the King,
Who sidewise lay outstretched like slaughtered wolf.
Then ceased the carnage; all male folk were slain ;
We women taken prisoners and spared,
Because they thought us shapely, strong, and fair,
And, scorning war-slaves for their wedded wives,
They gave us freedom, and they married us.
We nurse and rear the children of our lords ;

And every day make ready every meal ;
Fashion their garments, and keep bright the hearth.
We do all women have to do for men.
These are not worse than men of other lands :
Men are much like each other everywhere ;
Unfeeling, hard, and coarse throughout the grain.
Their thews are stouter, and our own must give ;
Their wills are sterner, and we must obey.

This is not what we thought our lives would be,
Adored Silenus, in the times agone ;
When, hallowed by the forest shadowing,
We heard thy stories of heroic men
Who loved their loving maidens tenderly.
We thought the common course of woman's life
Gently united with the man's she loved ;
That every meeting of their eyes bred smiles

In happy looks, and words of sweet content,
Contentment in each other winged with hope,
Sole blessing left us, our forefathers taught.
A word of doubtful meaning, never clear.
Hope now has left us in another sense:
We are but as we are, and must remain.

It gladdens us to know we had the care
Thy memory should receive a warrior's due
In this great rock placed where thine honoured bones
Were laid deep in the grave we filled with flowers.
For, while the curse clung withering on the land,
And nothing quickened in its barren soil,
We told the people our offended Gods
Must be appeased by sacrifice and prayer.
Five hundred strong men came with rolls and cords;
Long wooden levers, picks, and spades to dig
An even roadway and an easy slope

Whereon they urged the great rock inch by inch.
It gave us joy to watch their sunburnt limbs
Brighten with sinewy effort, as the words
To move were cried. With simultaneous shout,
They clenched, and put together all their strength
In one great impulse at the close and set
The rock where now it rests.
The toilers all
Fell back, and gazing on the feat awestruck,
Knelt, holding forth their arms and praised the
Gods!

We do not chatter idle words of thee,
Silenus; knowing thou wert huge and bald;
Thy lingering locks but loose, and scanty gray;
Thy smiling eyes were moist, and vague thy
lips;
And thy limbs creased with fatness like a babe's.
These plain defects, an easy gibe for churls,
Awoke within our hearts no pleasantry.
Whatever fair reproach might cleave to thee

We ever loved thee and thy gentle voice ;
Thy gentle voice that patiently disclosed
What heretofore our eyes had never seen
Our ears had never heard :
Why sharply edged
The driven scud of heaven against the wind,
And birds their spring notes sang so lustily ;
How the bees, seeking honey for themselves,
Ministered singing to the loves of flowers ;
How flowers, when in their fullest beauty bright
Could lure winged riflers to the fruits' increase ;
And why on one cheek alway blushes fruit.
Thou wouldst unweariedly narrate to us
The stories of the trees ; and why they turned
To this incline or that ; why at a slope
Whole forest flanks swerved inland from the shore
Thrifty of leaf ; and why some drooping sought
Shelter from light, to root in earth again ;
While others proudly, with exalted points
Trembling in sapphire, whispered to the wind.

It did not, loved Silenus, make us love
These tales the less because male creatures scoffed,
Calling them little and of little worth.
We loved them with thee; now we love them more,
Having lost both the Teacher and his tunes.
Our lords have arms of strength, and hold their spears
As weapons well in use; and with them we
Dread neither panther's teeth nor tusk of boar;
For deft are they with bow and arrows winged
To fell or check the hare and stag at speed;
But all their talk is ambush, capture, spoil;
Food, drink, and clothing; and the store for fires.
Our lords so little heed the joy around,
The sweetest flower asks vainly for a smile;
Unnoticed ring the woodland melodies,
And march the clouds of noon without regard.

Therefore do we on our permitted days
Heap the red roses on thy sacred rock.
Our lords believe the sacrifice we bring
Will add fresh clusters and protect their vines,
And they, remembering Dryantiades' fate,
Are gruffly lenient toward the rites we pay.
Our sweetest dreams are dreams of memory,
During the toilsome day, when lacking hope,
We wander backward in the olden time
And gather round thy feet to hear thy tales
Of Gods and Demigods, and favoured maids ;
Of Goddesses who deigned to mortal love ;
And dreadful monsters slain by strength divine.
Children of duty and obedience,
As these of ours, brought forth in nature's course,
Babble a duller music than the babes
Of love. Kindly we use our helpless ones ;
All things are kindly to their tender young ;
But children they of our lords' will, not ours,
We seem not nursing our own kith and kin.

Our fathers said the ruling Gods were just ;
And haply, when our bones are laid at rest,
In the Elysian Fields our shades may meet
The lovers of our souls we never found ;
When looking back, this loveless life of ours
Will be remembered as a feverish dream,
Where thine own hand was guide and comforter,
Saving us from the pitfalls of despair.
Our tears, affection, memory, all are thine.
Our solace thou art now. Our sweetest hopes,
That ever beck with smiles of welcoming,
Are in some way we know not mixed with thee.

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